

LENS SHADING ALGORITHM

RELATED PATENT APPLICATION

This application is related to US patent application docket number DS02-011, serial number 10/379,863, filed on March 4, 2003, and assigned to the same assignee as the present invention.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

(1) Field of the Invention

This invention relates generally to image processing and relates more particularly to a method and an algorithm to compensate lens shading or vignetting in digital images.

(2) Description of the Prior Art

Photographically, vignetting means the darkening of the corners relative to the centre of an image. All camera lenses suffer, more or less, of these optical phenomena.

Fig. 1 prior art describes some major steps performed in image processing. In the first step **10** a raw image is obtained. In the next step **11** the offset/gain calibration is

performed, followed by the compensation for vignetting **12**. The last step **13** is the color processing.

A simple lens obeys an optical law called the “cos-4th law” (cosine of the angle of incidence off the lens axis to the 4th power. The cos-4th influence comes from a number of factors, including that the light gets spread out over a larger area, and that the corners of the image are further away from the center of the lens than the on-axis part of the image. This means that for a lens with an angle of view of 20 degrees, where the maximum off-axis angle of incidence is 10 degrees, the corners receive $\cos(10 \text{ degrees})$ to the 4th power as much light as the center. $\cos(10 \text{ degrees})$ is 0.9848, so to the 4th power is 0.9406. Therefore the corners get 94 percent as much light as the center, a generally imperceptible difference. A 20-degree angle of view for a 35mm camera equates to a 123mm lens. For a 28 mm lens, with a 75-degree angle of view, cos4th comes to 0.39. So now the corners only get 39 percent of the light that the center gets. For a 20mm lens this goes down to 21 percent, and for a 15 mm lens this goes down to 10.5 percent. Obviously the last case is unworkable and is not acceptable.

In order to solve said problems with lens shading, cameras are using typically complex optical systems, which are very expensive to manufacture. It is a challenge for the designers of digital cameras to design a camera having very low vignetting using less expensive lenses.

A compensation of lens shading is performed using a correction factor, which is dependent upon the distance of the pixel from the center of the lens. **Fig. 2a prior art**

shows a top view of a lens/sensor system comprising a lens **21** and a sensor **20**. The center **22** of the lens **20**, which is also the center of the sensor, has the coordinates X_{center} , Y_{center} . A pixel **23** of the sensor **20** has the coordinates x , y . **Fig 2b prior art** shows a side view of said lens/sensor system comprising said lens **21** and sensor **20**. Light ray traces **25** emanating from an object **24** are reunited at the pixel **23** of the sensor.

The distance of the pixel **23** having the coordinates x , y from the center **22**, having the coordinates X_{center} , Y_{center} , can be calculated using the equation:

$$dist = \sqrt{(x - X_{center})^2 + (y - Y_{center})^2} . \quad (1)$$

An algorithm to compensate lens shading is

$$pixel_{new} = pixel_{old} \times f_{corr},$$

wherein the prior art correction factor f_{corr} is calculated using the equation

$$f_{corr} = 1 + f_c \times \left(1 - \cos\left(\frac{dist}{d_f}\right)\right)^4, \quad (2)$$

wherein the distance $dist$ has been calculated using equation (1) above and the constant factors f_c and d_f are dependent upon the geometry of the sensor system and the lens used. It is obvious that the correction factor according to equation (2) is difficult to calculate and algorithms, which are easier to be calculated, are very desirable.

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present invention describes a different method to compensate lens shading or vignetting in digital cameras. The compensation for vignetting is done in two steps. The first step is done during production of the camera unit and involves taking and analyzing an image of a test screen, preferably a gray test screen. This results in a set of e.g. 5x5 coefficients describing a polynomial surface. The second step is done for each image that is taken by the camera and involves calculating and applying a gain-table based on polynomial coefficients to all pixels of the image to compensate vignetting.

Other solutions dealing with the suppression of lens shading are described in the following patents:

U. S. Patent (6,388,706 to Takizawa et al.) describes an image processing method for an electronic camera which includes a photoelectric element having plural sensors and color filters in plural different colors, wherein each of the plural sensors corresponds to a respective one of the color filters in the different colors. The method includes the steps of: obtaining a signal value from a target sensor; obtaining the first average value from signal values of the sensors; obtaining the second average value from signal values of the sensors and obtaining an interpolation value for a color, which is different from that of the color filter of the target sensor, of the target sensor according to the signal value from the target sensor, the first average value and the second average value. The vignetting of a lens causes a decrease in marginal brightness of an image field. However, if the correction for the decrease in marginal brightness is performed at the same time of performing white balance adjustment or/and gain adjustment, the correction for the marginal brightness may be performed upon decreasing the calculation volume.

U. S. Patent (6,323,934 to Enomoto) discloses an image processing method in which at least one aberration of an optically recorded image selected from among lateral chromatic aberration, distortion, decrease on the brightness of the edge of image field and image blurring is corrected based on lens characteristics of a taking lens and position information of the image. Additionally, an image processing apparatus comprises an acquiring section for acquiring information identifying a taking lens; a storage section for storing lens characteristics associated with the type of the taking lens; and a correction section which receives the corresponding lens characteristics of the taking lens from the storage section and corrects at least one aberration selected from among lateral chromatic aberration, distortion, vignetting and image blurring. High-quality images that are free from color mismatch, distortion, uneven brightness, blurring and other defects, or both vignetting and distortion can be outputted consistently.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

A principal object of the present invention is to achieve a fast and efficient way to calculate correction values to compensate vignetting in digital cameras.

In accordance with the object of this invention a method to compensate vignetting in digital cameras has been achieved. Said method comprises a multiplication of each pixel output of the array sensor of the camera with a variable correction factor defined for each pixel, wherein said variable correction factor depends upon the distance between each pixel and the center of said sensor array.

Also in accordance with the object of this invention a method to compensate vignetting in digital cameras has been achieved. Said method comprises a multiplication of each pixel output of the array sensor of the camera, except pixels being close to the center, with a variable correction factor defined for said pixels, wherein said variable correction factor depends upon the distance between said pixels and the center of said sensor array.

Also in accordance with the objects of this invention a method to compensate vignetting in digital cameras has been achieved. Said method is using a correction factor for pixel output of its sensor array wherein the required computation comprises the following steps, first, to provide x, y coordinates for the pixels of the sensor array, to assign a first constant factor, describing the geometry of the lens/sensor system to a first variable f_1 , to assign a second constant factor, describing the geometry of the lens/sensor system to a second variable f_2 , to calculate the distance in x-direction between the location of a pixel

and the center of the sensor array and assign it to a variable x_{dist} to calculate the distance in y -direction between the location of a pixel and the center of the sensor array and assign it to a variable y_{dist} . Furthermore the next steps describe to calculate the square of the total distance between the location of a pixel and the center of the sensor array and assign it to a variable $dist2$, to calculate the total distance between the location of a pixel and the center of the sensor array to the power of four and assign it to a variable $dist4$, to calculate a correction factor and assign to the variable f_{corr} according to the equation $f_{corr} = 1 + f1 \times dist2 - f2 \times dist4$, and to multiply said correction factor with the old pixel value to get a compensated pixel value.

Furthermore in accordance with the objects of this invention a method to compensate vignetting in digital cameras has been achieved. Said method is using a correction factor for pixel output of its sensor array wherein the required computation comprises the following steps, first, to provide polar coordinates r and θ for the pixels of the sensor array, wherein the center of the sensor array is the origin of said polar coordinates, to assign a first constant factor, describing the geometry of the lens/sensor system to a first variable $f1$, and to assign a second constant factor, describing the geometry of the lens/sensor system to a second variable $f2$. The next steps comprise to calculate the square of the coordinate r of a pixel and assign it to a variable $dist2$, to calculate the coordinate r of a pixel to the fourth power and assign it to a variable $dist4$, to calculate a correction factor and assign to the variable f_{corr} according to the equation $f_{corr} = 1 + f1 \times dist2 - f2 \times dist4$, and to multiply said correction factor with the old pixel value to get a compensated pixel value.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

In the accompanying drawings forming a material part of this description, there is shown:

Fig. 1 prior art shows a flowchart of the various steps performed to process images in a digital camera.

Fig. 2a prior art shows a principal top view of a lens/sensor system

Fig. 2b prior art shows a principal side view of a lens/sensor system

Fig. 3 shows a graph describing principally how the correction factor f_{corr} depends upon the distance from the center of a sensor array.

Fig. 4 shows a flowchart of a method to compute the compensation of vignetting

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

The preferred embodiments disclose a novel algorithm and a method to compute a correction factor to compensate lens shading or vignetting of digital cameras allowing the usage of a cheaper lens and still producing a high image quality in respect of vignetting. Said algorithm of the present invention can be can computed in a very fast and efficient way and consumes less power and time for tits computation. A correction factor is calculated for each pixel of the sensor used.

At first for each pixel the square *dist2* of its distance from the center of the image array (as shown in Figs. 2a and 2b prior art) has to be calculated:

$$dist2(x,y) = (x - x_{center})^2 + (y - y_{center})^2, \quad (3)$$

wherein *X* and *y* are the coordinates of a pixel and *X_{center}* and *Y_{center}* are the coordinates of the center of an image array corresponding to the center of the lens used. The next step ids the calculation of the square *dist4* of this squared distance *dist2* has to be calculated:

$$dist4(x,y) = (dist2)^2. \quad (4)$$

Both coefficients are used now to calculate a correction factor to compensate vignetting according to the following equation:

$$f_{corr}(x,y) = 1 + f_1 \times dist^2 - f_2 \times dist^4 \quad (5)$$

wherein $f_{corr}(x,y)$ is a correction factor applied to each pixel of the image sensor array, f_1 is a constant dependent upon the geometry and quality of the lens/sensor system, and f_2 is another constant dependent upon the geometry and quality of the lens/sensor system. The size of the lens, the size of the active sensor area, the distance between lens and sensor, the focal length, the thickness of the lens (depending on the material), and the quality of the lens are factors influencing said constants f_1 and f_2 .

Finally the correction factor $f_{corr}(x,y)$ is applied to the pixel stream by multiplication:

$$pixel_{new}(x,y) = f_{corr}(x,y) \times pixel_{old}(x,y). \quad (6)$$

An alternative approach to define the distance between a pixel and the center of a sensor array is to use polar coordinates wherein the center of the sensor array would be the origin of the polar coordinates instead of x, y coordinates. The position of each pixel within a sensor array is known. Usually x and y coordinates are used to define the exact position of a pixel in a sensor array. Since the polar coordinates or positions are determined according to the distance or radius from an origin, symbolized by r and the angle relative to a reference axis, symbolized usually by Greek θ , the distance between a pixel and the center of the sensor array, being the origin of the polar coordinates in this case, is already known by knowing said coordinate r . The angle θ is not relevant in our case.

Another alternative approach is not to compensate pixels being very close to the center of the sensor array. Vignetting effects does not influence pixels having very little

distance to the center of the sensor array. This area has to be very small; otherwise a step (a circle around the center) is visible when the compensation starts in a distance too far away from the center.

Lens shading is efficiently compensated using the compensation method of the present invention. **Fig. 3** shows a graph describing principally how the correction factor f_{corr} depends upon the distance from the center of a sensor array. The correction factor f_{corr} is greater than 1 and, within a usual range, rises faster the greater the distance is from the center of the sensor array. The fact, that the curve gets almost flat beyond a distance from the center of the sensor array greater than a maximum distance in typical sensor arrays is nor relevant.

The flowchart of **Fig. 4** describes a preferred algorithm to compute corrected pixel data in order to compensate lens shading. In a preferred algorithm, with the exception of the last step **47**, a computation in integer format has been used to minimize the computation time required. Floating point computation could be performed as well. In the first step **40** the constant factor f_1 , used in equation (5), is loaded from a register. In the next step **41** the constant factor f_2 , used in equation (5) also, is loaded from a register. In the following step **42** the horizontal distance x_{dist} from the center of the sensor array of a current pixel is calculated, followed by step **43**, wherein the vertical distance y_{dist} from said center is computed. In the next step **44** the square $dist2$ of the distance of said current pixel to the center of the sensor array is computed according to equation (3), followed by step **45** wherein the square $dist4$ of the square distance, according to equation (4), is computed, According to equation (5) the correction factors f_{corr} are computed in step **46** and, finally, in

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step 47, according to equation (6), each of the original pixel values are multiplied with the related correction factors f_{corr} to get the vignetting effects of the lens compensated

While the invention has been particularly shown and described with reference to the preferred embodiments thereof, it will be understood by those skilled in the art that various changes in form and details may be made without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention.

What is claimed is: